

THE MAGIC LANTERN GAZETTE

Volume 2
Number 1

Spring
1990



THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Larry and I are very grateful for those kind folks that have written some very nice comments about the Gazette, and also about the "Dividend" otherwise known as Little Paul's Christmas, for Christmas. As some may well know, these efforts consume a significant amount of time on the part of Larry Cederblom, and I confess to some of my own. So it really is nice to hear that our efforts are appreciated. Our aim announced at the Seattle Convention was to give the members some quality material, and I am proud of what we have done so far. We will try to keep the steam up and the goodies coming.

To share a few of the comments received we print excerpts edited only for the sake of brevity and space limitations.

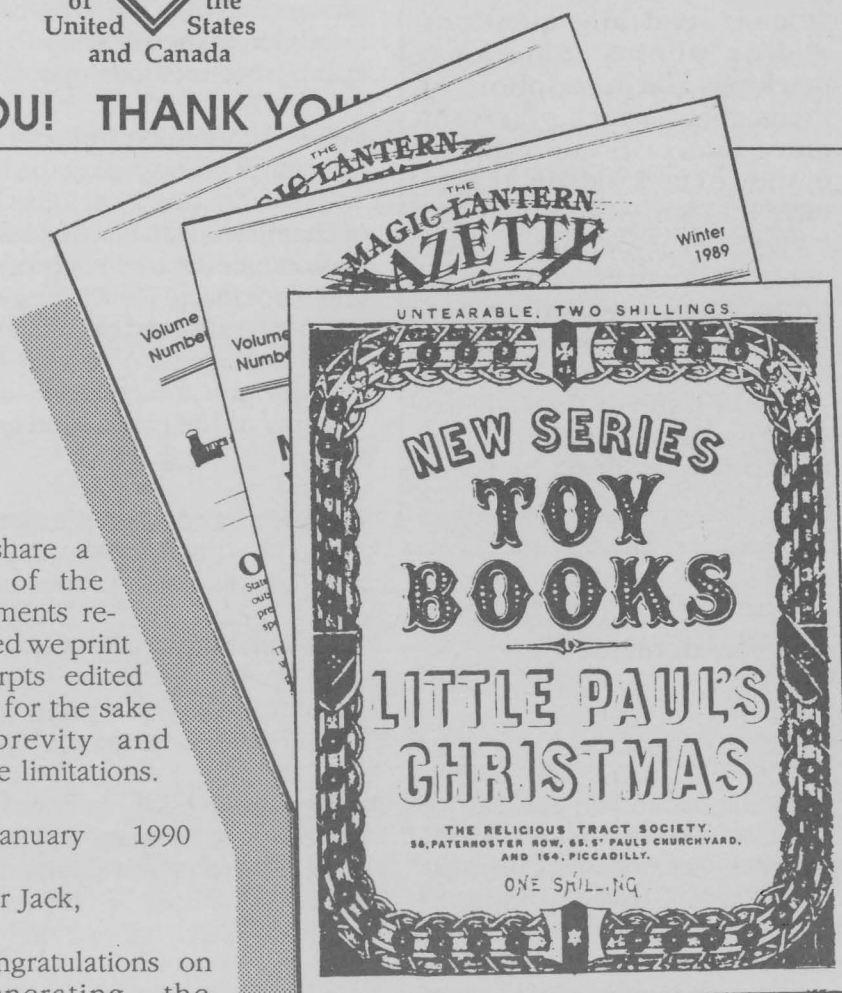
9th January 1990

Dear Jack,

Congratulations on regenerating the newsletter and other publishing activities of the Magic Lantern Society. The Gazette makes very interesting and newsy reading. The reprinted item with the color plate is a valuable addition to any collection.

Comments: I am thrilled to renew my membership. I enjoy the new format of the newsletter and welcome the informative articles.

Your letter stating that the Society was going to do up some reprints of old literature this year changed my mind on the subject of renewal!



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PURPLE PAPER

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THE LANTERN INFORMATION COLUMN

Beginning in the next issue, a new feature will appear in response to several requests, and the need to share knowledge about our most interesting area of interest.

Please send any questions and/or photos, diagrams, markings and descriptions of items about which you want more information, to the attention of Jack Judson, Jr. 445 Burr Rd., San Antonio, Texas 78209. Every effort will be made to answer your questions as quickly as time permits. The questions will be answered individually and in the next issue of the Gazette. Your name will not be used in the Gazette so don't be bashful.

Thank you continued

Dear Jack,

I had hardly begun this letter of congratulations to you and Larry on your new Gazette, when WHAM! along came "Little Paul's Christmas", and as I was recovering from that, BANG! along came No. 2 of the Gazette! I am reeling with admiration and envy. You are off to a really fine new start for the Society, and I wish you every success.



RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF MAGIC LANTERNS AND LANTERN SLIDES

By Jack Judson, Jr.

PART TWO—METAL PARTS OF LANTERNS

Having accomplished the steps in Part one, and you now have the wooden parts in great shape, we are now ready to tackle the somewhat more difficult task of Restoration and/or preservation of the Metal Parts. The process as with the wood begins with evaluation or assessment of the Condition of the Metal involved, as well as the type of Metal involved so that appropriate methods may be employed as necessary.

Before proceeding further I feel it necessary to repeat some precautions from Part One regarding the handling of chemicals and substances that I use and have found efficacious. Remember that when attempting the handling of chemicals, care must be taken to carefully follow the maker's instructions. I recommend the use of protective eyewear, perhaps protective gloves etc., and work in a place where a spill or an Oops will not damage anything, and will not be a hazard to yourself or others, particularly children. Test methods and materials in or on an inconspicuous or similar, but not worthy or valuable part, to determine the efficacy of the procedure. Plan what you are going to do, be patient and go gently. Technique is frequently as important as what is being done.

The views, procedures and methods mentioned are those of the writer and not to be considered those of the Magic Lantern Society of the United States and Canada. With proper care, I have never had a problem.

Well with all that out of the way, let's get on with it.

As with the wooden parts, it is important to clean them unless they are in new condition. Even then you should remove any dust, and if more than dust, then wipe them off with very soft flannel like cloth and use whatever solvent is necessary to remove whatever will come off with this method. It is necessary to keep a small assortment of Solvents on hand for such projects. Frequently dampening the cloth with plain water will successfully remove accumulated dirt or deposits. If not, then simple cigarette lighter fluid will likely remove other types of stains or deposits.

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The Gazette
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A publication
produced
by the
Magic Lantern
Society of the United
States and Canada.



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Well, it has been said that many people don't like to blow their own horn, but the eyes and ears of some of the Society are working well, so the reluctant, shy violets and such like are not all safe, and we will share the finds that have come to our attention since the December issue. If we have left anyone out, it is simply because we are not aware of what we have missed.

Our Honorary Life Member John Ripley of Topeka, Kansas continues on his fascinating way, working hard, continuing to garner honors for his great contributions in the Historical field, and the wonderful event of his 95th birthday in February of this year. For any of you that have not met and talked with John, you have missed a real treat.

The news is that the Fabulous Borton Duo of Debbie and Terry scored another hit with their Christmas show. It is always a sellout. They plan to do it again for the enjoyment of our British and European friends in London in April. We will enjoy it too. See you there Bortons!

I am not sure if she is as avid a collector of Magic Lanterns as she is of Kaleidoscopes, but if so look out! I refer to the lady known so wonderfully as Cozy Baker, who was pic-

tured with some of her collection of over 500 Kaleidoscopes in the February-March issue of Modern Maturity Magazine that some of us folks receive with membership in the AARP. The Grapevine says that she is going to the British convention in April, so I know all of us going there will enjoy meeting her.

Alan Kattelle and Dick Balzer went to the opening of the new Photography Museum in Bangkok, Thailand. Alan would rather not talk too much about all parts of the trip, but when asked about what he saw of Magic Lanterns, wrote "Did we see any lanterns? Well, yes—our first night at Phuket, we looked out of our balcony, over the Adaman sea, and saw glimmering lights away out on the horizon. Only the next day did we learn that they were indeed lanterns, hanging from the bows of fishing boats, bobbing on the Tropical Sea. Magical they were". And I guess that's plenty enjoyable enough.

Dick Balzer gave a talk at the Museum on the History, of the Magic Lantern, and says that he too had a fabulous trip.

Dick Balzer is also scheduled to give a Magic Lantern Slide Show at the Strong Museum in Rochester, New York on March 29, 1990.

The December 20, 1989 issue of the Antique Trader had an article on P. 61, about a Show held in St. Louis, Mo. on October 8, 1989 by the Midwest Photographic Historical Society. In this 1/2 page article, is a nice large photo of our members Elgin Smith and his wife Dorothy showing off a camera the Smith's rented to Paul Newman as a prop in a Movie filming nearby. Wow! some of our members travel in great company!

The Antique Trader Price Guide to Antiques for February 1990, had as

its special focus article, Magic lanterns and Optical Toys, by member Alan Kattelle. Alan was kind to give our Society a plug, and I have had some inquiries as a result. Thanks Alan. I hope other members plug the society when they go to camera shows and other functions, even when they give Shows—that's a hint and a hope.

The Chicago Tribune of Sunday, February 4, 1990 also mentioned the article, and gave our address, etc.

We also got a plug in the Fall 1989 Journal of the Photographic Historical Society of New England.

I wrote a short and general article which appeared with two pictures of one of my Scientific Lanterns in Photique Magazine or the Camera Shopper of February 1990 which also gave our address and some information about the society.

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art Catalog for Christmas of 1989, on Page 22, is offered item (D1320M) at \$8.95, a 96 page book of Paper Activities (Assembly) with one or more optical toys included. Their address is 255 Gracie Station New York, N.Y. 10028.

There is a Marvelous new book available in England, "Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern" by Steve Humphries and beautifully illustrated by Doug and Anita Lears incredible Magical Lantern Slides. I believe it can be had through David Henry of London, but I bought mine from Hatchards Book Store in London, before I knew David had them also.

A number of very nice Lantern oriented Christmas cards were received and enjoyed. Perhaps the most

Continued page 4



Small Treasures continued

unusual one received was a sort of sliding paper optical toy. Very inventive, and an original idea, but I don't feel right giving the name of the sender for fear he might be deluged with requests: but hope to see him in London again.

I have heard that although Bob Bishop has been ailing, he may well be much better, and is giving shows, so very good news Bob, and our thoughts and prayers are always with you,—keep that old lantern burning!

Joe Koch keeps the Lantern message going, and never seems to miss a Press opportunity for the Societies advertising. The most recent of which is in the January 8, 1990 issue of the Auburn, Washington Valley Daily News, which features a very large Photo of Joe looking his best?

We were able to obtain reprint permission from the Publisher for the Article appearing in this issue by member Ted Barber of New York city. It is a scholarly, well researched and written article and I hope you find it as enjoyable as I have. Furthermore it is a very nice piece of reference material.

Well, I believe this jam-packed issue doesn't have much more room, so will go to work here, and in Britain in April, and hope that others will continue to send in material we can all share.

Best—Jack.



Restoration continued

Do not use very wet cloths, for excess liquid might seep into places you do not want it to, resulting in slow drying or even damage.

Now that the metal parts are clean, they should be carefully examined to consider what additional steps are necessary.

If the metal has the right color, its finish is intact, and there is no corrosion to attend to, then I recommend that a careful application of Renaissance Wax will further clean, brighten and help protect the metal from future exposure. Renaissance Wax may be obtained from the best source I know:

Light Impressions, 439 Monroe Ave.,
Rochester, N.Y. 14607-3717,
or Toll Free at 1-800-828-6216.

It is terrific stuff, not very expensive, goes a long way, and was developed and is sold by authority of the British Museum. I have used it for years and it is great.

Here is where the going gets tougher, when the metal is not the right color, its finish is damaged or poor, or is corroded.

We next have to determine what kind of metal is involved, and what kind of finish it has. Each kind of Metal requires a different type of treatment.

Generally the Metals used in Magic Lantern construction are: Brass (sometimes of varying colors i.e., Yellow, Bronze tone etc.) Steel which can be finished by Blueing or Blacking with a Chemical Process, Plated with Nickel, Chrome, Brass, or Copper, or covered (painted) with a coating either clear with or without color or Opaque Paint; and a variety of other Alloy metals, such as cast white metal (Pot metal to some) and even Aluminum. Cast iron is also used, and likewise can be finished similarly to the steel. Of course all of the Metals may be utilized as cast parts, sheet metal, and formed or machined.

We begin with Brass, if for no other reason that it is the most frequently attractive part of many Magic Lanterns. How many times I have heard "isn't that a beautiful Wood and Brass Lantern"!

To my knowledge, and based on my experience with several hundred Magic lanterns in my own collection, and many others I have examined, the Brass parts were almost inevitably coated with Lacquer. And not just any Lacquer either. In fact, when one sees Brass parts on a Magic Lantern that have been repolished, and improperly relacquered, it is at once obvious, and furthermore almost always not the way it was originally, or should be now. To be truly accurate and as authentic as my eyes tell me it should be, a rather Golden look is correct as opposed to the bright yellow of just polished Brass.

If the Brass parts are the right Golden color, and they are bright, shiny, and the Lacquer is in good condition, or you simply don't want to venture further, then apply a good coat of the Renaissance Wax, polish it and leave well enough alone.

Continued next page



If the Lacquer is scraped, missing, damaged, and/or the color of the Brass has browned up, and is dull or corroded, then the tough decision must be made—leave it as is, or correct the problem by careful and proper restoration. The choice is always mulled about a bit and I have seen the wrong choice made simply because either there was a lack of know-how to do the right job, or a bad job was done, or just that the job was too intimidating. As I said with the reasons therefor in Part One on Wood, I subscribe to the Sensitive, Careful and Correct method of restoration, and that is the main reason I have spent so much time over many years learning what works and does not, and decided to share the results of such experiences.

If you have decided to Restore the Brass Parts—Great! Let's go to work.

Disassembly as necessary is usually a must, and should be accomplished carefully, making notes or diagrams of the order in which the parts were originally assembled. This is particularly true of lenses since there may be several parts in a projection lens assembly.

When disassembled, the Brass lens can then be polished easily if most or all of the original Lacquer is missing or removed. Care should be exercised when polishing so that no detail of the shape of the Brass is changed or lost, with special care not to round off sharp edges or threads. In fact it is not necessary to polish threaded areas, or the inside of lens assemblies for they are not usually visible when assembled or Flat Black painted on the inside of the lens barrel or tube.

There are several methods of polishing metal. If after removing the Lacquer there is no real corrosion, and the surface has simply darkened or

dulled, then a Jeweler's Polishing cloth impregnated with Jeweler's rouge, and obtainable from a Jeweler's supply house in your area, will most often give a very satisfactory shine. After thus shining the Brass, it should be thoroughly washed with Lacquer Thinner, well dried and then relacquered with the following product:

#2105 Special Gold Colored Lacquer from the G.J. Nikolas and Co., Inc. 2800 Washington, Bellwood, Illinois 60104.
They also have a Toll Free Phone # 1-800-346-4741.

This family company has been in business since 1890. The Lacquer can be bought in spray cans, which I use, but caution—you must buy at least a case of the cans, so it is best that a few people together buy a case and divide it up. It is not cheap, but then it comes to about \$5.00 per can via UPS. Good Spray paint in the usual retail market is about \$3.00 per can. One can will do quite a lot of Brass.

The application of more coats, within reason, results in ever deepening shades of Gold and very closely I think replicates the color of those originally colored Brass parts that I have seen. Bear in mind of course that a perfect match may not be possible due to age darkening from the air and light, not to mention the effects of moisture and heat over the years. After the Lacquer is thoroughly dry, and has been so for a few days, then apply a coat of Renaissance Wax, and polish to a nice glow.

Possibly the Brass is worse than above described, and more drastic or difficult tasks must be undertaken to prepare the Brass parts for refinishing. There may be corrosion, dents, scrapes and scratches, or dings which must be corrected. Have faith, it is not impossible, nor usually expensive to overcome these defects.

If there are but scratches or scrapes, they might be removed by rubbing with 4-0000 Steel Wool, or by buffing wheel polishing. Sometimes it is even worth taking the parts to an Electroplating or Polishing shop, where they will machine polish, but do not allow them to go further. Bring them home, and wash with Lacquer thinner as described, and then continue with the Relacquering, etc.

If you feel uncomfortable with removing dings or dents by use of Plastic faced hammers, and appropriate other tools, then a good source of repairing such is a musical instrument repairer. They are very familiar with such repairs and their charges are usually modest. They will frequently polish, but do not let them Lacquer—-you do it with the right color!

Continued page 6



Restoration continued

If there is corrosion and very dark Brass, there are some liquid Metal cleaners on the market, the absolute best of which for Brass and Copper is:

Revere Ware Instant Copper and Stainless Steel Cleaner. It is available on a retail level in many areas by the 16 ounce bottle, but if unable to locate it locally then Copper Clad Products, Inc. of P.O. Box 312 Reading, PA 29603 is the maker. Their phone is 201-355-6378, and they are very helpful in telling you where it may be obtained in your area or close to it. If not then you might want again to cooperatively purchase a case lot. It is not expensive and a little goes a long way. It is truly Instant, and has easy to use instructions. Clean and dry thoroughly (place in the oven at not over 250 degrees for about 30 minutes til I'm sure). Then follow the Relacquering instructions.

Sometimes it is good to buff with the 4-0000 Steel Wool before the final cleaning and finishing. In fact, doing so at most any stage can produce a very nice finish. Even applying the Wax with the Steel Wool sometimes produces a mellow look.

If the inside of lens barrels were painted with flat paint, and it is not in excellent condition, repaint with flat black, especially is this important inside the exposed front lens rings. Spray or use small brushes to do a neat job. Watch overspray onto places you do not want the paint!

Of course Brass parts such as Knobs, Screws, Flat Pieces, Bars, Tubes, etc. are to be treated as in all of the foregoing.

If the metal part was originally plated, but has peeled, or will not polish up satisfactorily with the 4-0000 Steel Wool, or a polish cloth, or buffing, or a liquid polish, then consider taking the parts to a careful Plating Company, and have it replated as original. Wow! it sure does look nice when this is done. Platers usually have a minimum charge, so sometimes it is more economical to take several pieces at one time, maybe even some just for polishing. Nickel plating was common on the older pieces, and had a somewhat Gray look, while some work was done in Chrome, which has a brighter silver blue look.

Of course Brass Plating was and is being done.

Sometimes some parts were Tin Plated and that's a little harder to get done now. Zinc Galvanizing was rarely done in my experience, so I will skip that too. If you have either of these try to clean and polish with the same grade of Steel Wool. Then wax.

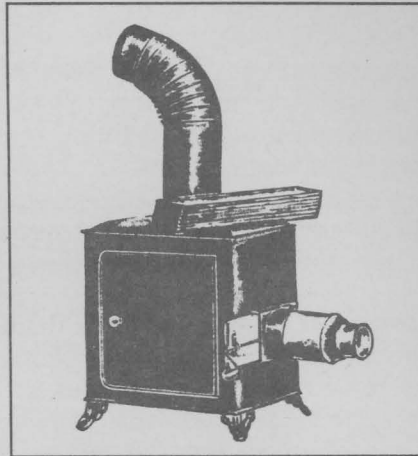
When reassembling lens assemblies, it is always wise to clean the glass parts thoroughly but exceedingly carefully, with materials used for lens cleaning.

Also lubricate all moving parts with White gun grease, or gun oil, so that they will function smoothly when reassembled.

Probably the most difficult restoration, is that of the Dark Blue or Black sheet metal bodies of many lanterns. The usual problem is rust in every degree from some small pits or patches, to an overall rusty look. I have found a number that had suffered that lack of care in the past, and had been painted over in black, or even colors, and all incorrectly. Do not despair, there is hope if you are very patient, take your time, and work diligently with the following instructions in mind. The results are sometimes rather miraculous, and at the least far better than a painted over or rusty item.

As with all other items, clean the metal thoroughly. Inspect the parts for extent of work needed, disassemble as necessary for this will be the messiest job yet.

If there is but very minor pitting or tiny rusty areas it is possible to avoid the following, but use of 4-0000 Steel Wool and removing the small amount of rust without materially changing Blue or Black finish. Gunsmiths Cold Bluing Solution found in most Gun shops can be used to spot blue or black (depending on the number of applications) and rubbing for the desired shade to match. Then the surface should be dried, steel woolled, and waxed.



If there is considerable rust over significant portions of the metal, then it will be necessary to remove as much rust as you can with the steel wool, and brushing off the dust. Then an application of a wonderful product called:

Rust Eradicator 2X by 3D Inc. of
 P.O. Box 711, St. Joseph, MI
 49004, Phone toll free
 1-800-272-5326. Removes all rust,
 though it may take a little time.

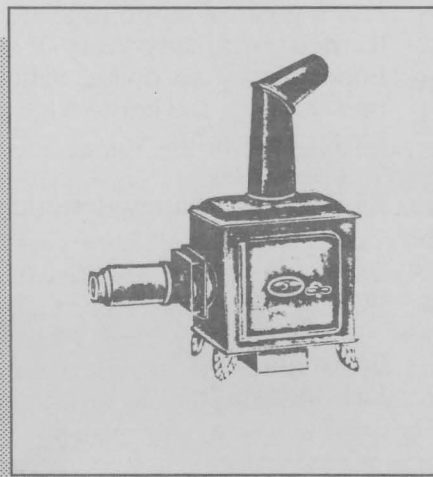
Remember that the Blued or Blacked Sheet steel (perhaps Russian Iron) was accomplished not by coating the surface of the metal, but rather with a chemical treatment that in fact rusts or oxides the surface Blue or Black, rather than Red or Brown, and thus when you remove the Red (and underlying Black) rust you will also remove that coloring. You will end up with the natural look of unfinished sheet steel—a dull silver grey color. No, I did not cause you to ruin it this way, and all is not lost. Once you have thoroughly washed, cleaned and dried, and then degreased the metal, careful applications of the Cold Blue or Black solution before mentioned, will bring back a nice color. As the solution most always contains Selenium, which is poisonous, you should be very careful using it. I have done it and you can too. If at first you do not like the appearance (perhaps a bit mottled) do it again and again until a good result is obtained. Follow the bottle directions carefully.

After the proper color and appearance is obtained, then be sure the surface is clean and neutralized, perhaps wiped down with a clean water dampened cloth, and very quickly dried. The oven treatment is best, but a light film of gun oil will prevent further rust while being heated. After drying thoroughly, was with my

favorite wax, If there is some pin point pitting, this can be hidden with an application of Black Paste Wax Shoe Polish, which when polished with a flat cloth, will fill the pits, and you won't see them quite so prominently. I have done this, and find it an acceptable way to achieve the best possible restoration.

If any metal part has come loose, and seems to have been originally soldered together, I strongly recommend against attempting to resolder together. Instead, a strong and most often invisible reattachment can be made by using any brand of clear 5 minute 2 part Epoxy. Do not use too much, and be certain to follow the directions carefully, especially mixing thoroughly.

Of course if there were dents or dings, etc. in the sheet metal it is always wise to correct these defects before the above treatments are done, and a much more pleasing result will be obtained.



If rust is removed from what was and is a raw unfinished part made of cast Iron or Steel, then the Rust Eradicator will do a great job. After neutralizing, the part can be well dried, and coated with a clear Lacquer to prevent further rusting.

White Metal or pot Metal can be repaired using the same Epoxy, and then that part can again be Gilded, or painted in whatever was the original color.

Repainting is not forbidden, and should be done when an absolutely awful peeling object is at hand. This is where some considerable sensitivity comes into the project. It would be better to leave the object as is as to very badly, with the wrong color, repaint the item. Thus it is incumbent on you to very carefully determine from what ever paint is left, what is the proper color to use for retouching or complete repainting. Fortunately, there is a very nearly fool proof way to do this. Take the object to an Automobile Paint Dealer with whom Auto Body Repair Shops deal. They have facilities for very accurately matching paint colors, even faded ones. They can sell it to you in brushable form, and some of them have the further capability of putting it up in regular spray can at what I consider a fair price considering everything. Then carefully prepare the item for painting and get with it. When well dried, and hard after a few days, use the 4-0000 Steel Wool with some of the Wax and polish it out. If of course it had stripes, reapply them, and they Wax. This may all sound terrible, but believe me, it is done daily everywhere in restoring very valuable antique cars, with exquisite results.

Missing parts can be replicated, if you have something to go on. The Smoke chimneys can frequently be replicated very accurately by a good sheet metal worker using Wood Stove Blued or Blacked sheet metal for the Stock. Be

Continued next page

Restoration continued

Sensitive to Authenticity by comparing new stock in color and texture to some original part. Use photos or diagrams from similar Lanterns for Replication of shapes, again for accuracy.

A few additional tips—When cleaning, use one of a variety of very small brushes. Some Brushes have Stiff natural bristles, some with Nylon bristles—Such as Toothbrushes, or Vegetable or Small Scrubbing Brushes available everywhere. Some very small Brushes can be obtained with Brass or even Copper bristles. Gun Shows in your area will almost always have 1 or more persons selling tools for working on Guns, and I have always found my supplies of needed Brushes there at very reasonable prices. Always buy extras, so as to keep enough on hand to do the job, for the Gun Shows are normally held only once or twice a year. Some Gun Shops also carry these items.

Not covered in this part is what to do about restoring of Polychrome (Clear colored) finishes on some Toy Lanterns, and the very rare Browning and Blacking by chemical process of certain Brass or Bronze parts of very few Lanterns. Some even may have had Browned steel parts. I believe I have found the answer for the Polychrome Clear Finishes, but must travel to the source for additional information and availability. This information will be published as soon as possible, likely in the third part of this series.

Anyone who has a Blacked or Browned Brass or Steel part that needs refinishing can write me for the procedure.

Well, that ought to keep you busy for quite a while.

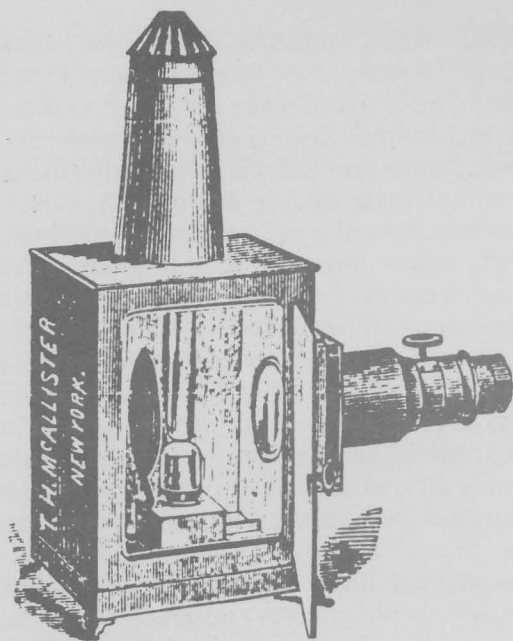
In Part 3, I will cover repairs to Slides, along with thoughts on lenses, as well as sources for miscellaneous parts.

It is a great pleasure to share what I have in some instances, laboriously learned over many years of restoring many types of equipment. It is my hope that by so doing, valuable historical artifacts will be restored and preserved for the knowledge and enjoyment of the present generation and for those that follow.

Til next time, happy Restoring,

Jack 

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Jack Judson, Jr.



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Film History, Vol. 3, 1989.
"Phantasmagorical
Wonders: The Magic
Lantern Ghost Show in
Nineteenth-Century
America" by
X. Theodore Barber.

Phantasmagorical Wonders: The Magic Lantern Ghost Show in Nineteenth-Century America

by X. Theodore Barber

Abstract Etienne Gaspard Robertson's Phantasmagoria was the most influential magic lantern ghost show of the early nineteenth century. The article describes Robertson's exhibitions and the manner in which his effects were produced, including his use of projector movement to alter apparent screen size. The work of other ghost show lanternists in the United States over the years 1803 to 1839 is seen as clearly derivative of Robertson's exhibitions.

Current scholarship credits the Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens with the invention of the magic lantern in the mid-seventeenth century. The predecessor to today's slide projector, the magic lantern used transparencies made of glass onto which the images to be projected were hand painted, photographic slides not being employed until the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the magic lantern was the forerunner of the motion picture projector because it could screen moving images by means of special slides or adaptations of the lantern itself. Mechanical slides, which were in existence by 1713, were the most common way to convey a scene in motion. These mechanicals usually consisted of two pieces of glass, one placed over the other. Thus, for example, a windmill without its sails might be painted on the bottom, stationary piece of glass, and the sails themselves might appear on a movable glass disk placed on top of it. A hand-operated pulley wheel caused the disk, and hence the sails, to revolve.

Amusing and quaint images such as the windmill scene were commonly projected by the first part of the eighteenth century, when popular itinerant showmen began touring with the lantern throughout

Europe, giving public exhibitions in homes, halls, and taverns. The original developers of the lantern had apparently already exploited its "magical" potential, however, and slides of phantoms, devils, and other macabre subjects had been screened in front of the first private audiences, who were often members of the elite or royal classes. In fact, Huygens' device was referred to as "the lantern of fright,"¹ and Athanasius Kircher's description of the lantern in his *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* of 1671 was accompanied by illustrations showing projections of a soul in purgatory and a skeleton holding an hourglass and scythe.

In the last three decades of the eighteenth century, however, frightful and supernatural subject matter again became the style. This was the age of Romanticism, a movement that had an element of the bizarre and irrational, and the Gothic novel, with its atmosphere of mystery, madness, and darkness, was having its heyday. The time was ripe for the development of a type of magic lantern horror or ghost show. Thus audiences expecting to be frightened by the sight of apparitions attended the magic lantern "séances" held by Georg Schröpfer at his coffee house in Leipzig around 1770 as well as the specter shows of such magicians as Philidore and the American-born Jacob Philadelphia, who performed in various capitals of Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century.² It was Etienne Gaspard Robertson, though, who refined the magic lantern ghost

X. Theodore Barber has studied film and theater history at Harvard University and New York University. He has a special interest in the precursors of the cinema and is currently preparing a full-length history of the magic lantern show in America. Please address correspondence to 40 Waterside Plaza, apartment 21H, New York, New York 10010.

show into an elaborate, orchestrated event so successful that it spawned many imitations.

Born in Liège in 1763, Robertson established his exhibition in Paris by 1799, presenting it first at the Pavillon de l'Echiquier and then moving it to an abandoned chapel, which formerly held the skeletal remains of monks, at the Couvent des Capucines.³ Termed the *Fantasmagorie* (derived from the Greek for "phantasm assembly"), his show played for six years, and because it dealt with the mysterious and unknown it appealed to Parisians, who were themselves in an uncertain, transitional period, having experienced the upheavals of the French Revolution.

Robertson provided some details of the typical *Fantasmagorie* show in his memoirs.⁴ The audience entered a somber room painted or draped with black, decorated with gloomy images, and illuminated by a weak lamp. In this environment they became grave and spoke in whispers. When the show was ready to begin, Robertson stepped forward and delivered a speech that warned against superstition and impostors who have deceived the credulous, but

his words were ambiguously phrased and even open to the interpretation that the ghosts about to be seen were real. At the least, some people present were apparently so overwhelmed by the apparitions that they forgot that the show was based solely on tricks. This would account for the engravings showing audiences reacting with utter terror to the *Fantasmagorie* (depictions which seem to go beyond mere iconographic formula; see Figure 1) and for the fact that the show was temporarily halted by the police because it was thought that Robertson could bring Louis XVI back to life.

Having completed his speech, Robertson quickly extinguished the light so as to plunge the room in total darkness for the next hour and a half. This in itself was frightening, but to increase the terror he proceeded to lock the doors. The audience then heard the noise of rain, thunder, and a funeral bell calling forth phantoms from their tombs, and Franklin's Harmonica, a form of musical, water-filled glasses, provided a haunting sound which served both here and throughout the show to mask the noise



Figure 1. French engraving depicting Robertson's show at the Couvent des Capucines. Note Robertson projecting from behind the screen.

of the goings-on behind the scenes. During these sound effects, Robertson was setting up his magic lantern behind the screen, rear projection being in fact a key to his performance. The audience could see the slides on a cambric screen that had been made slightly diaphanous by coating it with a varnish of white starch and gum arabic, but the lanternist and the actual workings of the show remained hidden. Another brilliant touch was that he sometimes rear projected his slides onto smoke, creating an eerie effect.

Robertson called his ingeniously devised magic lantern a fantoscope. This lantern was one of the first to feature an Argand oil lamp, a significant improvement in artificial lighting that made use of a tubular wick (Figure 2). The projection power of earlier lanterns had been severely limited by the weak illuminants used in those devices—typically candles or

simple oil-burning lamps. The increased illumination provided by the Argand lamp allowed Robertson and the later exhibitors who used it to give shows in larger venues than had previously been possible. The lantern was also equipped to present the illusion of a phantom appearing as a small figure at a distance and then gradually approaching and growing to an immense size before suddenly disappearing. A table with casters at its feet held the lantern and could be moved forward and back on two parallel wooden rails nailed to the floor directly behind the screen. Thus when the lantern was close to the cambric the transparent image was small, but when the device was moved back the projection grew in size (see Figure 3). While moving the lantern, Robertson not only had to be careful to adjust the focus so that the picture would always be clear but also had to manipulate a special shutter mechanism over the lens that

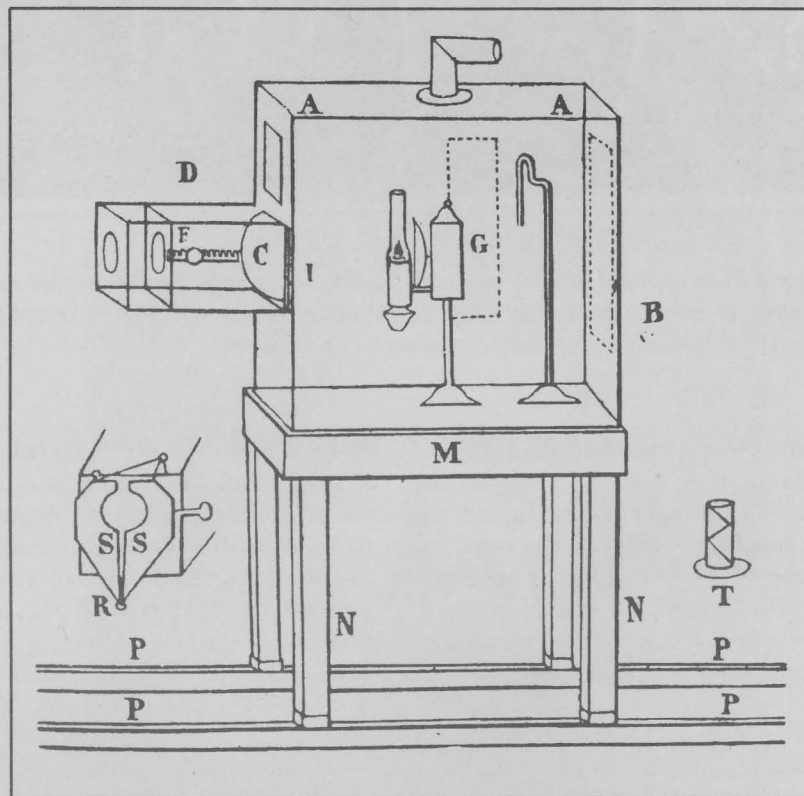


Figure 2. Robertson's Fantoscope, with its Argand lamp (G), adjustable focus (F), and shutter mechanism (SS), which attaches to the end of tube (D). From Etienne Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques d'un physicien-aéronaute*, 2 vols. (Paris: Etienne Gaspard Robertson, 1831–33).

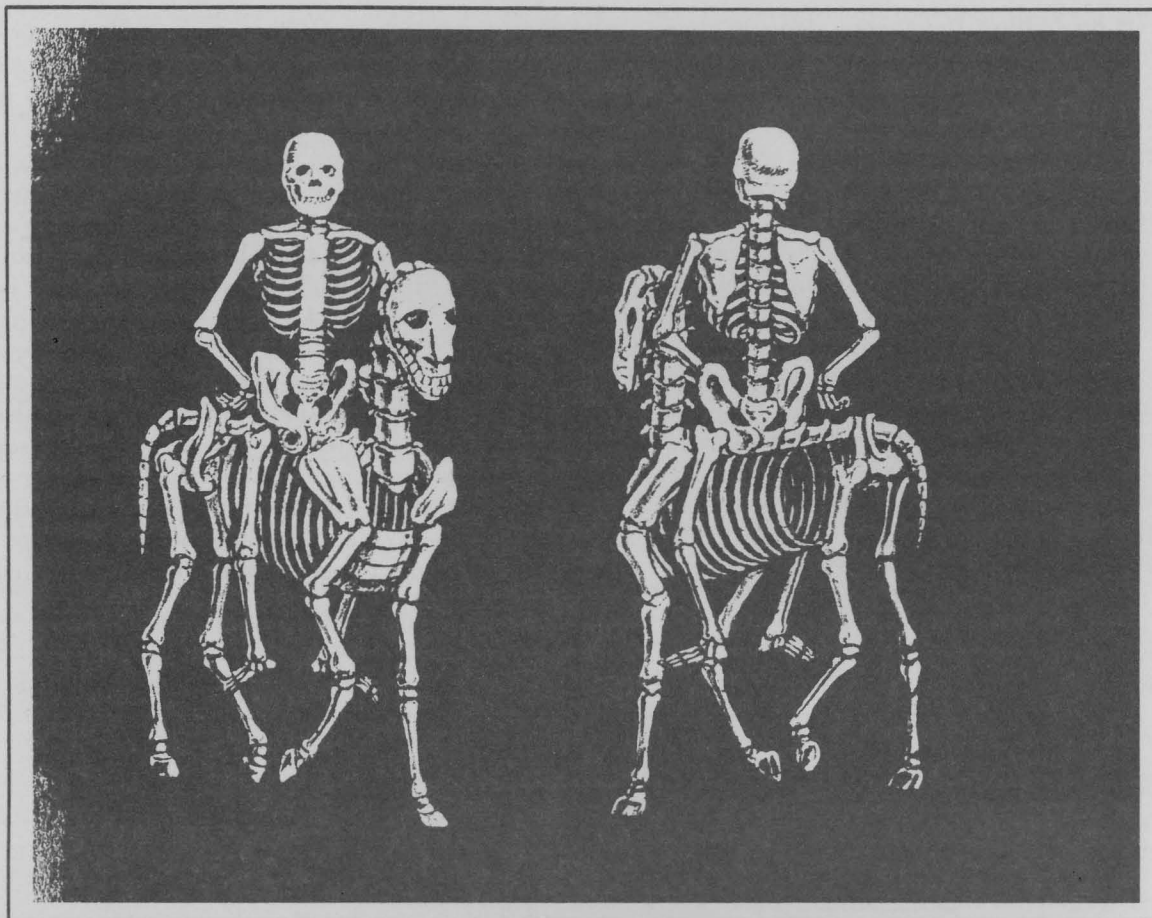


Figure 3. Phantasmagoria slides depicting skeleton on horse, attributed to Robertson. A frontal view was projected when the phantom appeared to be approaching the spectators; a rear view was projected when it appeared to be receding. Collection of Jac Remise. Reproduced by permission.

controlled the amount of light passing through the slide. Because the lantern had to be close to the screen to create a small, seemingly distant figure, the image produced was bright, contrary to the optic expectation that a far object would be faint. Therefore, Robertson had to cut down the light in this instance, and as the picture grew he had to increase the illumination. Closing the shutter altogether made the apparition disappear.

Robertson also used mechanical slides to give a sense of motion to his phantoms, and one of these survives among a small collection of his transparencies at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris. It is a two-piece slip slide, one glass showing the face of a specter, the other glass, placed over it, showing the eyes. Moving the latter glass back and forth made the eyes roll.⁵

In general, Robertson's slides were painted with

transparent oils, and careful attention was paid to shading and detail that would show up fairly well when projected with the Argand lamp. An essential element to his slides was that each image was surrounded by blackness, so that, when screened, it seemed to float free in the air without any background or unnecessary light around it. In some cases, though, Robertson wanted to provide an environment for his projected figure. This he did by using a second lantern located in front of the screen but hidden from the view of the spectators. For example, a front, stationary projector threw the image of a cloister on the screen, while a rear, mobile lantern displayed the approaching phantom known as the Bleeding Nun, an image derived from the Gothic novel *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis. This set-up allowed for the successful superimposition of images coming from multiple lanterns.

The first projection that the audience saw at the Fantasmagorie was a lightning-filled sky; this projection probably made use of the two-lantern technique, one lantern displaying the sky and the other the bolts of lightning. Then ghosts and skeletons were seen to approach and recede. Transformations occurred when a figure dwindled in size and disappeared but then gradually reappeared in another form. In this way the Three Graces, for example, were changed into skeletons. Sometimes the phantoms emerged from a tomb, and other times they could be seen crowding around a boat waiting to pass over the river Styx. On occasion they spoke, Robertson or one of his assistants providing the voice. Additional terrifying scenes included the Preparation for the Witches' Sabbath, Medusa's Head (Figure 4), and the Ghost of Samuel Appearing to Saul. Usually the slides concerned either death or the satanic (see Figure 5), but Robertson also presented a few allegories, myths, and legends, such as the popular History of Cupid, which did not deal with these topics;

like many other early lanternists he made no effort to be fully consistent in his subject matter.

Robertson was actually more than a lanternist, and the Fantasmagorie could be called a true multimedia event. Besides the fantascopes with its transparencies, an opaque projector called a "megascopes" was employed to project the images of solid objects, including live actors costumed as apparitions. Shadow projection also played a role in the display. The scene known as the Dance of the Witches was an elaborate form of shadow show that made use of multiple, moving light sources to create a crowd of dancing figures. "Ambulant phantoms" that roamed through the audience were masks fixed to a plank and appropriately draped and lit. Finally, Robertson used three-dimensional statues, such as one depicting a skeleton on a pedestal that frequently closed the show.

Robertson's imitators usually did not stage such elaborate ghost shows and tended to rely more exclusively on slide projection. One of the first of these

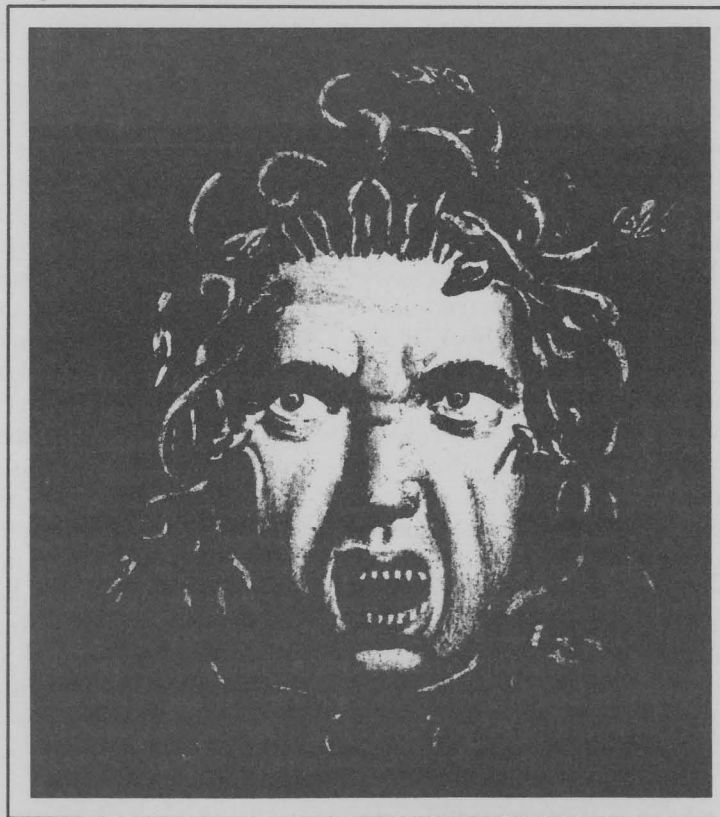


Figure 4. Phantasmagoria slide depicting Medusa's Head, attributed to Robertson. Collection of Jac Remise. Reproduced by permission.

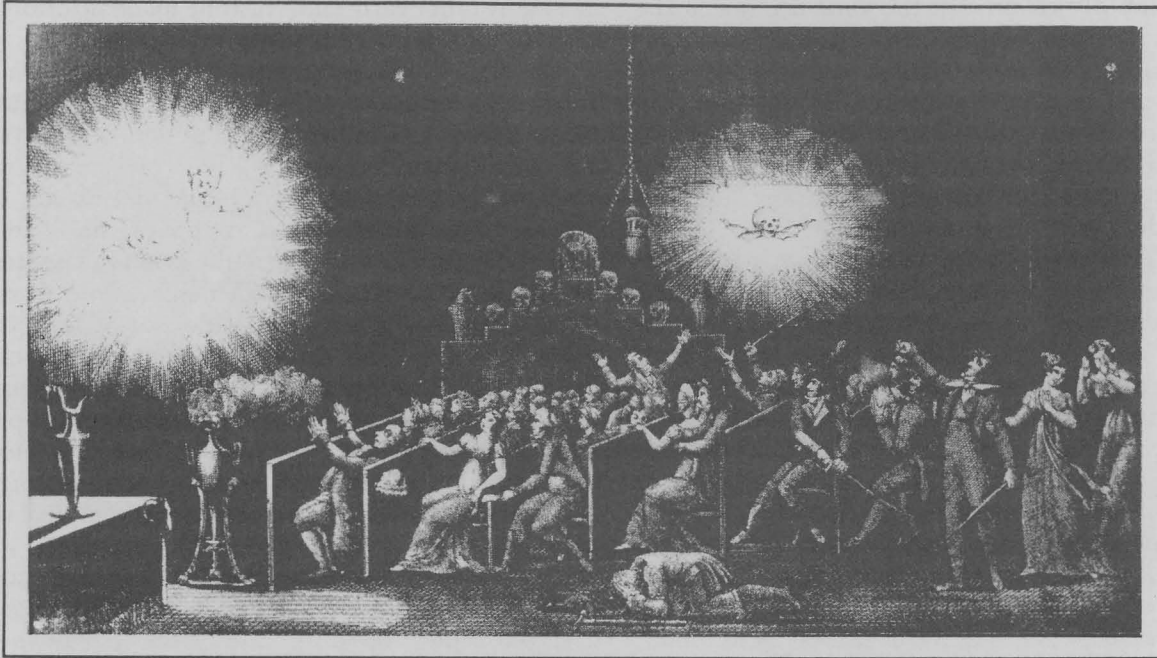


Figure 5. Robertson's *Fantasmagorie*, as depicted in his *Mémoires*.

imitators was Paul de Philipsthal, whose entertainment, now termed the Phantasmagoria, was seen at the Lyceum in London late in 1801. To judge from his playbill (Figure 6), Philipsthal modified the entertainment in several ways that came to influence later exhibitors. His bill announced that the Phantasmagoria "Will introduce the Phantoms or Apparitions of the DEAD or ABSENT, in a way more completely illusive than has ever been offered to the Eye in a public Theatre, as the Objects freely originate in the Air, . . . occasionally assuming the Figure and most perfect Resemblance of the Heroes and other distinguished Characters of past and present Times." Although Robertson had occasionally shown portraits of living figures in his show, Napoleon being one example, Philipsthal featured such portraits in his presentation, cleverly referring to them as Phantoms of the Absent. The playbill then went on to explain, in more explicit terms than Robertson had used, that the specters to be conjured up were in no way real and were meant to be an elucidating amusement: "This SPECTROLOGY, which professes to expose the Practices of artful Impostors and pretended Exorcists, and to open the Eyes of those who still foster an absurd Belief in Ghosts or Disembodied Spirits, will, it is presumed, afford also to the Spectator an interesting and pleasing Entertainment."⁶

The Phantasmagoria show took root in the United States by 1803 and flourished until about 1839. It suited the Romantic spirit that was developing in this country at the time and expressed an underlying mood of fear and uncertainty of a nation growing rapidly and exploring its frontiers. It also played on people's anxieties about death and the afterlife; in this regard it can be seen as a predecessor to the Spiritualist séance, which was to become a common form of American religious performance in the second half of the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly some Spiritualist mediums even used a magic lantern to summon ghosts, but their purpose was to deceive whereas the American Phantasmagoria showmen, like Philipsthal before them, stressed that their exhibition was rational and mechanically derived, a declaration in keeping with the growth of popular fascination with science. In fact, the Phantasmagoria represented a unique blend of both the irrational and the scientific, each of which was a prevalent interest among the general American public.

The advertisement for the "tremendous spectacle of Phantasmagory" to be seen at a covered rotunda on the grounds of Mount Vernon Garden, New York from late May and into July, 1803 specified that the object of the display was to show that ghosts were nothing but deceptions and thus "to destroy the ab-



PHANTASMAGORIA, THIS and every EVENING, AT THE LYCEUM, STRAND.

M. DE PHILIPSTHAL.

Take the earliest Opportunity of informing his Patrons, and the Public at Large, that in consequence of some Attempts to imitate upon him a spurious Imitation of his OPTICAL and MECHANICAL INVENTIONS, he has obtained HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL LETTERS PATENT, under the Protection of which he will have the Honour to EXHIBIT:

Optical Illusions and Mechanical Pieces of Art.

SELECT PARTIES may be accommodated with a MORNING EXHIBITION at any appointed Hour on sending timely Notice.

To prevent Mistakes, the Public are requested to Notice, that the PHANTASMAGORIA is on the Left-hand, on the Ground Floor.

The OPTICAL PART of the EXHIBITION

Will introduce the PHANTOMS or APPARITIONS of the DEAD or ABSENT, in a way more completely illusive than has ever been offered to the Eye in a public Theatre, as the Objects freely originate in the Air, and unfold themselves under various Forms and Sizes, such as Imagination alone has hitherto painted them, occasionally assuming the Figure and most perfect Resemblance of the Heroes and other distinguished Characters of past and present Times.

This SPECTROLOGY, which professes to expose the Practices of artful Impostors and pretended I mediums, and to reveal the Lives of those who still foster an absurd Belief in GHOSTS or DISINCARNATE SPIRITS, will, it is presumed, afford also to the Spectator an interesting and pleasing Entertainment; and in order to render these Apparitions more interesting, they will be introduced during the Progress of a tremendous Thunder Storm, accompanied with vivid Lightning, Hail, Wind, &c.

Figure 6. Paul de Philipsthal's showbill, London, 1802. From Dates and Sources (London: The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain, 18).

surd opinions which prevailed in the last ages.”⁷ Although this announcement did not provide the name of the showman,⁸ it did indicate that the display would present both “horrible” and “pleasing” phantoms that would “appear at a great distance, and become gradually larger, and at last disappear from the spectator.” Presented every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening at eight o’clock for an admission of eight shillings (box seat) or six shillings (pit), this performance also included musical interludes and hydraulic experiments. Most Phantasmagoria

shows in America were in fact the last featured item on a bill with other entertainments that varied from scientific demonstrations to Chinese fireworks to magic tricks.⁹

A shadow show was on the bill with Bologna and Tomlinson’s Phantasmagoria, which opened at the City Hotel, New York on November 7, 1803.¹⁰ Inaccurately advertised as the first Phantasmagoria ever presented in America, the production could be seen on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings for one dollar, a typical admission fee for many Phantas-



magoria shows in the years to come, although some could be seen for as little as the twenty-five cents that was sometimes charged for rear or gallery seats. Bologna must have been Jack Bologna, a member of a famed European family of clowns and acrobats and a star of pantomime who gave ghost shows in Europe. According to an 1805 bill for his Phantasmagoria presented in London, his apparatus had been constructed by "M. DUMUTIER, under the direction of Professor ROBERTSON, of Paris."¹¹ In addition to his ties to Robertson, he was also clearly influenced by Philipsthal because his American newspaper advertisements reproduced that showman's playbill description of the Phantasmagoria, including the references to "Apparitions of the Dead or Absent" and "Spectrology."

Bologna's premiere in New York suffered from "inaccuracies in consequence of part of the Machinery having been badly constructed, through the hurry of a first representation," as the managers explained in the *New York Post* of November 9, 1803. The second show was more successful, though, and the *New York Daily Advertiser* of November 11 noted that it attracted "a very respectable company, all of whom appeared perfectly satisfied with the representation, which was executed with the utmost neatness and attention. . . . The astonishment produced in the scenes of the ghosts and apparitions was very great." The entertainment continued into December but moved to the Union Hotel, where it was given every evening except Sunday.¹² In early January, 1804 it was being presented in New Brunswick, New Jersey.¹³ Whether or not Bologna made further appearances in America in later years is not known, but he did sell equipment or the rights to perform his show to John Durang, the American-born dancer and actor, who produced a Phantasmagoria "purchased of Sig. Bologna" at the New Theatre, Philadelphia, on April 9, 1808.¹⁴

William Bates, a comic performer, took up Phantasmagoria showmanship in 1804 and gave Boston its first entertainment of this kind on June 18, 1804 in the "commodious Hall" of the Columbian Museum,¹⁵ such museums at the time being important centers for popular entertainments that educated as well as amused. Here again, Philipsthal's description of the Phantasmagoria was used in the advertising. After a seemingly incongruous presentation of comic routines, Bates gave an introduction to the Phantasmagoria and then showed slides of ghostly subjects such as the Aerial Progression of Old Father Time; a Female Spirit, rising from the tomb; the King of Terror; and the Ghost and Hamlet. A particularly intriguing image was An Egyptian Pigmy Idol, which

instantaneously changes to a Human Skull; this might have been accomplished by means of a mechanical slide or by Robertson's transformation technique described above. The portraits projected included Bonaparte and Shakespeare as well as the American figures Washington, Franklin, and the President, Jefferson.¹⁶ A reviewer for the *Independent Chronicle* was impressed with the way the "objects diminish on the eye of the spectator" but noted that "Some of the figures, indeed, did not seem so perfect as others."¹⁷ On September 30, 1804, Bates also introduced the Phantasmagoria to Providence, Rhode Island, where a reviewer mentioned that the head of Washington was greeted with rapturous applause, whereas "an emphatic hiss of contempt and detestation spontaneously rose to salute the shade of the bloody usurper Bonaparte."¹⁸ This was a change from the depiction of Napoleon as heroic peacemaker in Robertson's first shows.

From December 4, 1806 through mid-January, 1807, Boston's Columbian Museum housed another Phantasmagoria, this time put on by Mr. Martin, a Parisian showman.¹⁹ Martin was actually Martin Aubée, one of a pair of brothers who were probably the first of Robertson's imitators. The brothers had served as Robertson's assistants at the Pavillon de l'Echiquier, Martin being hired as a carpenter, but they stole his production and staged it in Paris when he left briefly for Bordeaux.²⁰ Martin also toured Europe with the show; Madrid, for example, saw his spectacle from January to May, 1806, the same year he brought it to America.²¹

Martin's Boston advertisements declared that the "spacious hall" of the Museum was "decorated," presumably in the foreboding style of Robertson, and provided with foot stoves for the ladies. It also would be "illuminated and darkened instantaneously, in a very surprising manner." This effect was explained in the autobiography of another Phantasmagoria showman, Andrew Oehler, who was performing in Mexico City in 1806: he masked rather than stifled his candlelight so that he could make it appear to go on and off magically.²²

Martin's show, as could be expected, was highly reminiscent of Robertson's. He began with a tempest with thunder and lightning. This was followed by various ghosts appearing in different directions and by the phantoms of celebrities. A scene depicting Charon's ferry was included, as was the image of the giant Goliath, who also appeared in Robertson's show. Martin specified that his Goliath would "enter-

tain the audience by smiling, making faces, etc.," so this slide must have been mechanical; another transparency of this type was used to create the effect of a phantom who would "change his head six times." Other scenes included Romeo and Juliet shown dying, the Tomb of the Dives, the Tomb of Mary Stuart, and a subject designed to appeal to the American audience by mythologizing its own history, the Apotheosis of Washington. One reviewer found these transparencies to be "superior to any thing of the kind, ever exhibited in this country."²³ Martin did more than show slides, however; he also presented shadows depicting the Dance of the Witches, and at one point in the evening a three-dimensional skeleton went "through the theatre so naturally as if he were animated."²⁴ Martin's Boston run was brought to an abrupt end on January 19, 1807, when he accidentally set fire to the Columbian Museum's second-story hall, where he had been performing. An explosion resulting from his preparations for fireworks that were to be exhibited with the Phantasmagoria was probably the cause.²⁵

Although his equipment was lost in the fire, Martin managed to acquire a new projector by May 18, 1808, when he began to present the Phantasmagoria at the Lyceum in New York. An advertisement for this show called attention to the scene of Mary Stuart rising from her tomb and to Goliath whose head would be shown "about 10 feet wide"; this last detail is an indication of the size of Martin's screen. Then, on June 15, the production acquired some notoriety when the *Commercial Advertiser* printed an article decrying the Lyceum as "a place converted from a church into a place of amusement, for vulgar minds, such as tricks of legerdemain; and where the devil dances on stilts to the tune of a hand-organ." Whether or not this satanic dance really appeared in the show is uncertain, but there probably was some musical accompaniment to the production. In any case, Martin's business increased as a result of this negative publicity, and he wrote to the same newspaper on June 20: "Since that publication, more ladies and gentleman than before have come to see" the show, so "Mr. Martin, who was ready to leave the city this week, will continue till the 4th of July, to show as many devils as they may desire to see, and in doing this he hopes to keep the devil from his pocket."

In May and June, 1809, Martin brought the Phantasmagoria to Philadelphia. A noteworthy feature of this exhibition was that an "Orchestra of Italian Music" was in attendance; this no doubt was the orchestra associated with Falcone's Ball Room, which served as the venue for the show.²⁶ Savannah,

Georgia saw his Phantasmagoria in February, 1810. Staged at the "house of Citizen Smith" and featuring Robertson's famous image of the Bleeding Nun, this was, however, not Savannah's first ghost show. Another, unspecified exhibitor had reached this far south in July, 1806 and produced the Phantasmagoria in one of the city's theaters, admitting "colored people" to the back of the upper boxes.²⁷ By January, 1811 Martin seemed to be finished touring the United States, for he took out an advertisement in Baltimore stating that all his equipment was for sale and that he would instruct the purchaser in its use.²⁸

By March, 1807 the New York museums were taking advantage of the Phantasmagoria rage and presenting their own shows. E. Savage staged a ghost show at the museum of which he was proprietor, located at 166 Greenwich Street, before moving the production to the Shakespeare Gallery of D. Longworth, the bookseller, on July 18 and then to the Lyceum (which previously held Martin's show) on October 27, 1808 for a run to conclude the following month.²⁹ Savage's spectacle featured megascope projections such as "a bloody hand grasping a steel dagger" as well as "appropriate music on the piano by Miss Riley." His newspaper announcements described the Tomb of the Dives slide scene, which also had been part of Martin's repertoire: amidst thunder and lightning a wicked rich man rose from his tomb and lifted his hands to heaven as if imploring mercy but was overwhelmed by flames and a tremendous shower of fire.³⁰ Given the complexity of this scene, it must have involved several projectors and a number of slides, some of which were mechanical.

Another New York museum, this one at the corner of Greenwich and Dey Streets, hosted the Phantasmagoria from March 10 through May 1, 1808. This show was rather theatrical in that it featured the portraits of actors and was structured in acts. A breakdown of the content of each act, however, reveals how the Phantasmagoria could have a variety format so typical of popular entertainments of the time, jumping from image to image without any clear reason or connecting thread and even including musical interludes. The spectacle also could incorporate subjects that did not pertain directly to the central theme of the macabre, for as the years went by the term Phantasmagoria was increasingly associated with the showing of any slides of any topic, so long as they were projected by Robertson's methods. Act I presented Hamlet and the Ghost; Macbeth and the Witches in a thunderstorm; the Magician who commands Ghosts to rise and disappear at



pleasure; Garrick as Richard III; Kemble as Rolla, bearing off the child; Mrs. Siddons as the Grecian Daughter; and the Death of General Wolfe. Act II featured the Vision of the Night Mare; an American Rattlesnake; the Cock of France; the Beggar's Petition; Fifteen Likenesses of Distinguished Persons, such as Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Hancock, Robert Morris, Frederick III of Prussia, the Emperor of Russia, and Mrs. Jones, late of the New York theatre; and a Song. In Act III the spectator saw the Eruption of Mount Vesuvius (probably achieved by projection onto smoke); the Flying Furies, Spirits which fly all around the room; and Twenty or Thirty Likenesses of Celebrated Characters. The Battle of Prague, rendered on the organ, concluded that section. Chinese fireworks and a Dance of Characters (i.e., Robertson's Dance of Witches) made up Act IV.³¹

Numerous other showmen took up the Phantasmagoria. Some of these were established stage magicians such as John Rannie, whose ghost show could be seen in New York and Philadelphia in 1810³²; Falconi, who at New York's Tammany Hall in 1817 presented complex scenes depicting Charon and the Styx, the Tomb of J. J. Rousseau, Danae and the Brazen Tower, and the Conquest of the Golden Fleece³³; and Adrien, the "elegant" French performer whose exhibition played such cities as Baltimore in 1825 and Philadelphia ten years later.³⁴ Even amateur actors put on a Phantasmagoria show. In 1811 the Thespian Corps of Cincinnati, Ohio followed a performance of the play *The Poor Gentleman* with ghostly projections advertised as "scientific, rational, and astounding."³⁵ Little is known, however, about the background of other Phantasmagoria showmen such as Maffey, whose 1818 exhibition in Boston welcomed children at half price, an indication that the ghost show by then had become so popularized that it was considered appropriate for all ages.³⁶ An exhibitor by the name of Massonneau, billing himself as a "scholar" of Robertson, brought the Phantasmagoria to Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania around 1819³⁷; Snell put on the show in Lexington, Kentucky in 1821³⁸; and Le Claire appeared in Brooklyn, New York in 1823.³⁹

One of the most famous Phantasmagoria exhibitors did not stage his spectacle in the United States until 1825, however. This was the aeronaut and physicist Eugene Robertson, son of the inventor of the show. After touring Europe he arrived in New York, where he displayed the Phantasmagoria at the Lafayette Circus in August, 1825.⁴⁰ Bostonians also witnessed the show at the Circus in Washington Gardens from October 26 through November 22 of

that same year; the advertisements for that run noted that the display, accompanied by music, presented the likenesses of the world's heroes as well as scenes from history, fiction, and mythology. They also pointed out that show was not terrifying and did not demand a total absence of light.⁴¹ In an effort to reach a broad audience who might otherwise hesitate to attend an eerie demonstration, Eugene Robertson seemed to compromise his father's original principles. By May, 1827 he was giving the show, which now featured some megascope projections, at the Camp Street Theatre in New Orleans, but after this he made his way to Cuba and eventually went back to Europe.⁴²

Eugene Robertson, however, did return to the United States for a few months in 1834, presenting the Phantasmagoria at New York's Euterpean Hall in July and September of that year.⁴³ An extant showbill for the event lists hydraulic and other experiments to be followed by the Phantasmagoria (Figure 7); the bill was meant to convince all, including children (who were to sit in the front seats), that apparitions were nothing but optical illusions. Mr. Louis Major presided at the pianoforte during the projections. These included some that seemed frightful despite the showman's protestations to the contrary: the Thunderstorm, the Drum of the Eumenides, the Visions, His Satanic Majesty, Medusa's Head, the Shade of a Departed Hero, and Doctor Young Interring his Daughter. This last probably referred to Edward Young, the Englishman who authored the melancholy meditation on death titled *The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts* (1742–45), after his stepdaughter and a number of other relatives died. Devised by Etienne Robertson and used in his shows, the Young slide scene was described in his memoirs: Young was seen carrying the body of his daughter in a moonlit cemetery. He entered a vault and attempted to find an empty tomb, but each was occupied by a skeleton that refused to give up its place. Finally, one ghost, after speaking to Young, let him have a tomb. Once interred, the daughter was seen to rise to Heaven, which caused Young to prostrate himself. Other scenes, such as the Balloon and the Parachute, Frederick the Great at Spandaw, and French Brandy/Jamaica Rum/English Gin were no doubt less grim, as was Rose of Love, an allegory that was also detailed in Etienne's memoirs (a rose tree was planted by a village girl and watered by a shepherd; after emerging from a rose, Eros united the two young lovers).⁴⁴

Although Eugene Robertson's show presented a number of remarkable images, audiences of the 1830s were probably growing tired of the Phantasmagoria. In fact, when Adrien presented a ghost

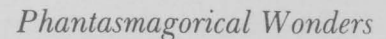


Figure 7. Eugene Robertson's handbill, New York, 1834. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Courtesy of Françoise Levie, Brussels.

these techniques were used to project subjects other than supernatural ones. Indeed, in a complete turnaround from the original nature of the Phantasmagoria, Robertson's special lantern effects were even used by American scientists of the late-nineteenth century to demonstrate scientific principles. In a lecture on acoustics delivered by Prof. Edwin J. Houston at the Philadelphia Academy of Music around 1879, a lantern wheeled back and forth behind the screen projected the face of a bugler whose cheeks were distended in the act of blowing. A hidden musician concurrently played an actual



EXTRAORDINARY EXHIBITION ARTISTS' GALLERY, SUMMER-ST. MONS. ADRIEN, SEN.

THE ORIGINAL GREAT MAGICIAN,

The best that has ever appeared in Europe or America, who has surpassed all that have ever been seen to this day,—the proprietor of a rich Cabinet, the finest ever seen, has the honor to inform the citizens of Boston that he will give this Evening,

MONDAY, JULY 29, 1839,

and every successive evening, (Saturdays and Sundays excepted,) for a short time, an Exhibition composed of many of his most

NOVEL AND INTERESTING FEATS,

such as have never been before attempted by any other individual.

PART I.

Slight of hand,	Physical Changes,
Illusions,	Magic,
Necromancy,	Metamorphosis.

Together with an infinity of BEAUTIFUL RECREATIONS, particularly
DEDICATED TO THE LADIES!

PART II.

THE PHANTASCOPE!

IN WHICH WILL BE EXHIBITED

NOCTURNAL APPARITIONS!!

of a highly interesting and surprising character, which cannot fail to delight the spectator.

**THE EXHIBITION WILL BE VARIED EACH EVENING
BY A VARIETY OF EXTRAORDINARY NOVELTIES.**

Mons. ADRIEN flatters himself that he will receive the patronage of the citizens of Boston by his particular endeavors to please and gratify his audience, and that the name and reputation of his exhibition render it unnecessary to give additional details respecting it.

In fitting up the Saloon, particular attention has been paid to the comfort and convenience of an audience.

ADMITTANCE 50 CENTS. CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OF AGE, HALF PRICE.

Doors open at 1-2 past 7 o'clock. Exhibition to commence at 1-4 past 8 o'clock, precisely.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE NEW-ENGLAND GALLERY.

Figure 8. Adrien's handbill, Boston, 1839.

bugle, and the music was made to grow louder and quieter in harmony with the size of the projected image to illustrate how distance could affect the perception of sound.⁴⁷

Another interesting survival of the Phantasmagoria is its currency as a word in the English language, signifying a changing series of things seen or

imagined. Nathaniel Hawthorne, for one, used the word frequently in his writings. To cite an example, a character in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) had a propensity "to hang over Maule's well, and look at the constantly shifting phantasmagoria of figures produced by the agitation of the water over the mosaic work of colored pebbles at the bottom."⁴⁸

In discussing the survival of the Phantasmagoria, it should also be mentioned that another form of specter entertainment did become fashionable in America in the 1860s and 1870s. Known as Pepper's Ghost after its English popularizer John H. Pepper, this effect presented moving images of phantoms on a sheet of glass that were actually reflections of costumed actors hidden from the audience's view.⁴⁹ Thus the occasional late-nineteenth-century production of a ghost show may have used either Robertson's or Pepper's techniques or a combination of both. In 1889, for instance, Frank Hoffman, a showman with the Barnum and Bailey Circus, presented "supernatural illusions and visions exhibiting a series of startling, theosophical delusions and ethereal phantoms by modern scientific means" in a "black tent" darkened to keep out light.⁵⁰ Nothing is known, however, of Hoffman's production methods.

Needless to say, the Phantasmagoria was a cinematic event with its projection of moving images by means of mechanical slides and wheeled projectors. In other ways, too, it (along with magic lantern practice in general) resembled film, especially the early motion pictures screened around the turn of this century. Designed to appeal to popular audiences, the Phantasmagoria made use of music, sound effects, and the commentary of a narrator to enliven the otherwise silent imagery. In some cases, the spectators may have even been caught up in the spectacle to the extent that they believed in the reality of the images before them. As with early film, distribution was dependent on touring exhibitors who brought the show to rented halls and other venues throughout the country. The projectionist or showman played a role in selecting the sequence of the images to be screened, just as short films could be presented in any order, but a variety format that went from subject to subject without a clear connecting thread was typical projection practice. One Phantasmagoria showman often copied the successful themes and images presented by another, and likewise early filmmakers duplicated or imitated the work of their competitors. In addition, some of the techniques used in the Phantasmagoria eventually found their way into film; the looming heads of

phantoms or celebrities, for example, were precinematic close-ups. It was the early trick films, however, that most clearly paralleled the Phantasmagoria, which in itself was part of the magic tradition. Many of these films included transformations, superimpositions, and rear projections, not to mention frequent appearances of ghosts, skeletons, and the like.⁵¹ With horror films later taking up these same techniques and motifs, the Phantasmagoria could be said to survive, but in a new form, to the present day. ●

NOTES

1. S. I. van Nooten, "Contributions of Dutchmen in the Beginnings of Film Technology," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* 81 (February 1972): 119.
2. Hermann Hecht, "The History of Projecting Phantoms, Ghosts and Apparitions, Part 2," *New Magic Lantern Journal* (Great Britain) 3, no. 2 (December 1984): 3-5; Franz Paul Liesegang, *Dates and Sources: A Contribution to the Art of Projection and to Cinematography*, trans. and ed. Hermann Hecht (London: The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain, 1986), 18.
3. Françoise Levie, who is preparing a book about Robertson, claims that he did not give shows in Paris until 1799, although earlier dates have often been cited (Françoise Levie to author, March 19, 1985). The best sources of information about Robertson's Fantasmagorie show available in English include David Robinson, "Robinson on Robertson," *New Magic Lantern Journal* 4, nos. 1-2-3 (April 1986): 4-13; William Tebra, "Robertson and His Phantasmagoria," *Magic Lantern Bulletin* 7, no. 4 (March 1986): 3-9; and J. E. Varey, "Robertson's Phantasmagoria in Madrid, 1821 (Part I)," *Theatre Notebook* 9 (July 1955): 89-95 and "Robertson's Phantasmagoria in Madrid, 1821 (Part II)," *Theatre Notebook* 11 (April 1957): 82-91.
4. Etienne Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques d'un physicien-aéronaute*, 2 vols. (Paris: Etienne Gaspard Robertson, 1831-33). Excerpts relating to the Fantasmagorie show are translated in Robinson, "Robinson on Robertson."
5. Varey, "Robertson's Phantasmagoria (Part II)," 82-83. Jac Remise also owns some slides attributed to Robertson. One of these is mechanical and depicts a death's head with movable wings. Jac Remise, Pascale Remise, and Régis van de Walle, *Magie lumineuse: Du théâtre d'ombres à la lanterne magique* (Paris: Balland, 1979), 47.
6. Paul de Philipsthal, playbill for show at Lyceum, London, 1802; quoted in Hermann Hecht, "Some English Magic Lantern Patents," *New Magic Lantern Journal* 2, no. 2 (January 1982): 2.
7. *New York Chronicle Express*, 30 June 1803.
8. According to George C. D. Odell (*Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 2 [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1927-49], 183), a Monsieur Martin was performing in New York in late 1802. If this was the same Martin who was later to stage a number of Phantasmagoria shows in America, then he was in New York at this early date and may have put on the Mount Vernon Garden exhibition.
9. The Phantasmagoria was in itself a type of magic act, but it was also frequently presented in conjunction with other forms of deception and illusion. An important account of the American Phantasmagoria show in the context of the history of stage magic can be found in Charles Joseph Pecor, "The Magician on the American Stage: 1752-1874" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1976), 163-73, 249-51. Pecor's work was also published as *The Magician on the American Stage 1752-1874* (Washington, D.C.: Emerson and West, 1977). The role of magic, including the Phantasmagoria, in the development of cinema is discussed in Erik Barnouw, *The Magician and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981).
10. *New York Evening Post*, 5 November 1803.
11. Bologna, bill for show at Lower Theatre, Lyceum, London, 1 February 1805, British Museum; reproduced in Varey, "Robertson's Phantasmagoria (Part II)," 90. Dumutier was probably a variant (or incorrect) spelling of Dumortiez, who with his brother Jules Molteni was a leading French lantern maker. Laurent Mannoni, "The Magic Lantern Makers of France," *New Magic Lantern Journal* 5, no. 2 (August 1987): 4.
12. Odell, *Annals*, vol. 2, 207.
13. *New Brunswick Guardian*, 5 January 1804.
14. *Philadelphia Aurora General Advertiser*, 9 April 1808.
15. *Boston Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist*, 16 June 1804.
16. *Boston Gazette*, 28 June 1804.
17. *Boston Independent Chronicle*, 21 June 1804.
18. George O. Willard, *History of the Providence Stage: 1762-1891* (Providence: Rhode Island News Co., 1891), 32.
19. *Boston Gazette*, 4 December 1806-15 January 1807.
20. Levie; Robinson, "Robinson on Robertson," 6.
21. Varey, "Robertson's Phantasmagoria (Part I)," 93.
22. Oehler never presented the Phantasmagoria in the United States, but he did settle in New Jersey. Erik Barnouw, "The Fantasms of Andrew Oehler," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9 (Winter 1984): 40-44.
23. *Boston Gazette*, 1 January 1807.
24. Descriptions of Martin's Boston show appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, 29 December 1806 and 12 January 1807 and in the *Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist*, 24 December 1806.
25. *Boston Gazette*, 19 January 1807. See Pecor, "The Magician," 171 for further details about the fire.
26. *Philadelphia Aurora*, 1 May-27 June 1809.
27. J. Max Patrick, *Savannah's Pioneer Theater from Its Origins to 1810* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1953), 69, 74.
28. Milbourne Christopher, "Seeming Impossibilities," *Sphinx* 42 (April 1943): 39. Similarly, when Martin was leaving Madrid in 1806, he advertised that his equipment was for sale. Varey, "Robertson's Phantasmagoria (Part I)," 93.
29. Odell, *Annals*, vol. 2, 287, 321.
30. *New York Evening Post*, 18 July 1807.
31. Odell, *Annals*, vol. 2, 302-303.
32. *New York Post*, 6 March 1810; *Philadelphia Aurora*, 14 April 1810.
33. *New York Post*, 17 and 23 June 1817.



34. *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 17 January 1825; Adrien, programme for show at Masonic Hall, Philadelphia, 4 November [1835], Theatre Collection, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, New York.
35. West T. Hill, *The Theatre in Early Kentucky 1790-1820* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1971), 68.
36. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 23 September 1818.
37. *Philadelphia Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 14 May-1 June 1819; Felix Reichmann, "Amusements in Lancaster 1750-1940," *Historical Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 45, no. 2 (1941): 46.
38. *Lexington Kentucky Gazette*, 1 February 1821.
39. Odell, *Annals*, vol. 3, 84.
40. *Ibid.*, 164; *New York Post*, 29 August 1825.
41. *Boston Columbian Centinel*, 26 October 1825.
42. Levie; John S. Kendall, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theater* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1952), 45.
43. Odell, *Annals*, vol. 3, 697; vol. 4, 43.
44. Eugene Robertson, handbill for exhibition at Euterpian [sic] Hall, New York [1834], Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; courtesy of Françoise Levie. The exact nature of several additional scenes on the bill (Love Shaves Every Body and the Head with the Revolving Glory) remains unclear. The Dance of the Chinese was probably a variation on the Dance of the Witches.
45. Adrien, Senior, handbill for show at Artists' Gallery, Boston, 29 July 1839; reproduced in H. J. Moulton, *Houdini's History of Magic in Boston 1792-1915* (Glenwood, Ill.: Meyerbooks, 1983), opposite 27.
46. See, for example, Benjamin Pike, Jr., *Pike's Illustrated Descriptive Catalogue of Optical, Mathematical, and Philosophical Instruments*, vol. 2 (New York: Benjamin Pike, Jr., 1848 and 1856), 207-11.
47. "The Phantasmagoria Effect," *Exhibitor*, no.8 (August 1879): 59.
48. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), 142.
49. For details about the effect, see George Speaight, "Professor Pepper's Ghost," *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, vol. 15 (January-March 1963), 48-56.
50. *Barnum and Bailey Show Route Book of the Season of 1889* (N.p.: Joe Meyer, P. T. Barnum, and sole owners of the Greatest Show on Earth, 1889), 14.
51. See Barnouw, *The Magician*, 85-105 for a discussion of some of these trick films and their techniques.

FROM THE NORTHWEST CORNER

YOU ARE INVITED

At our last meeting in 1989, it was decided that we would work out the dates for 1990 meetings. So here are the dates that can be put on your calendars: The first meeting will be at the Bishops Sunday, March 4th next on Sunday, May 20 at the Beckers in Vancouver, then Sunday, August 19 at the Halls, love those summer days in Gig Harbor. On October the 28th a new Halloween show will be seen at the Cederbloms. And the final meeting of the year will be at the Kochs on Sunday, December 9th.

If any member is in the Northwest area during the dates listed and would like to attend our local meeting please let us know and we can make arrangements for accommodations etc., contact: Joe Koch, Larry Cederblom or any of the other NW members.

THE DATES TO REMEMBER

March 4
May 20
August 19
October 28
December 9



A bit of history

From *Popular Mechanics* 1908

Combined Moving Picture and Talking Machine

A device, which is practically nothing more than a combination of the graphophone horn now in use and a projecting lantern with moving picture rolls, has been invented for the purpose of giving the thousands of owners of talking-machines the

added pleasure of having their records illustrated with appropriate scenes, or views of singers and monologue artists themselves. Pictures and music are turned on simultaneously and worked together, the pictures being projected through the same horn that projects the sound.

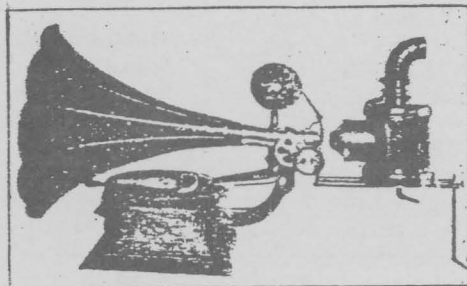
The device can be quickly connected to any make of talking-machine by the simple turning of a screw. The lantern, fitted with a Welsbach light, is then attached to a gas jet, a sheet is hung across one side of a room, and everything is ready to commence operation.



More history

From *The Antique World Newspaper*, April 1980

Northwest members of The Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada will meet the afternoon of April 12, 1980 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. R.O. Bishop, Sr. Seattle, WA. A unique gathering, for members and guests, it will be the first such gathering of lanternists in well over 100 years, nationwide.



Pictures and Music



WANTED AND SALE ADS

The Society will accept such ads for inclusion in the next issue. This ad space is for members, and there is no charge for members.

Should a non-member wish to advertise, the cost will be \$.20 per word including addressed.

Please send your ads in as soon as possible.

WANTED

Information about 19th century slides of New York city. Please contact Charles Musser, Box 820 Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108

WANTED

To all members of THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY, I am writing this open letter, to reach a mass majority in one newsletter, to enlist your help.

I am currently researching glass slides, in particular those relating to the early cinema of the years 1910 or earlier through 1929 (the silent years) and to be more specific I am mainly interested in those slides known as "COMING ATTRACTIONS" slides.

Any information you can provide, no matter how trivial would be of immense value to me. Such as, but not limited to: The slide's history(ies), years of useage, companies that made them and techniques in their making, coloring and restoring. As well if you know of any written material either by yourselves or others, pertaining to the above that appeared in periodicals and books, et cetera.

Of special interest are personal recollections from friends, relatives et al who may have been theatre managers, projectionists, organists or maybe you just remember their (slides) use in theatres when you were patrons. But, whatever the case, I look forward to hearing from one and all.

You can write me at: P. O. Box 8423
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CA 91608-8423

With warm and sincere wishes, thank you.

Kevin John Charbeneau
KEVIN JOHN CHARBENEAU



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